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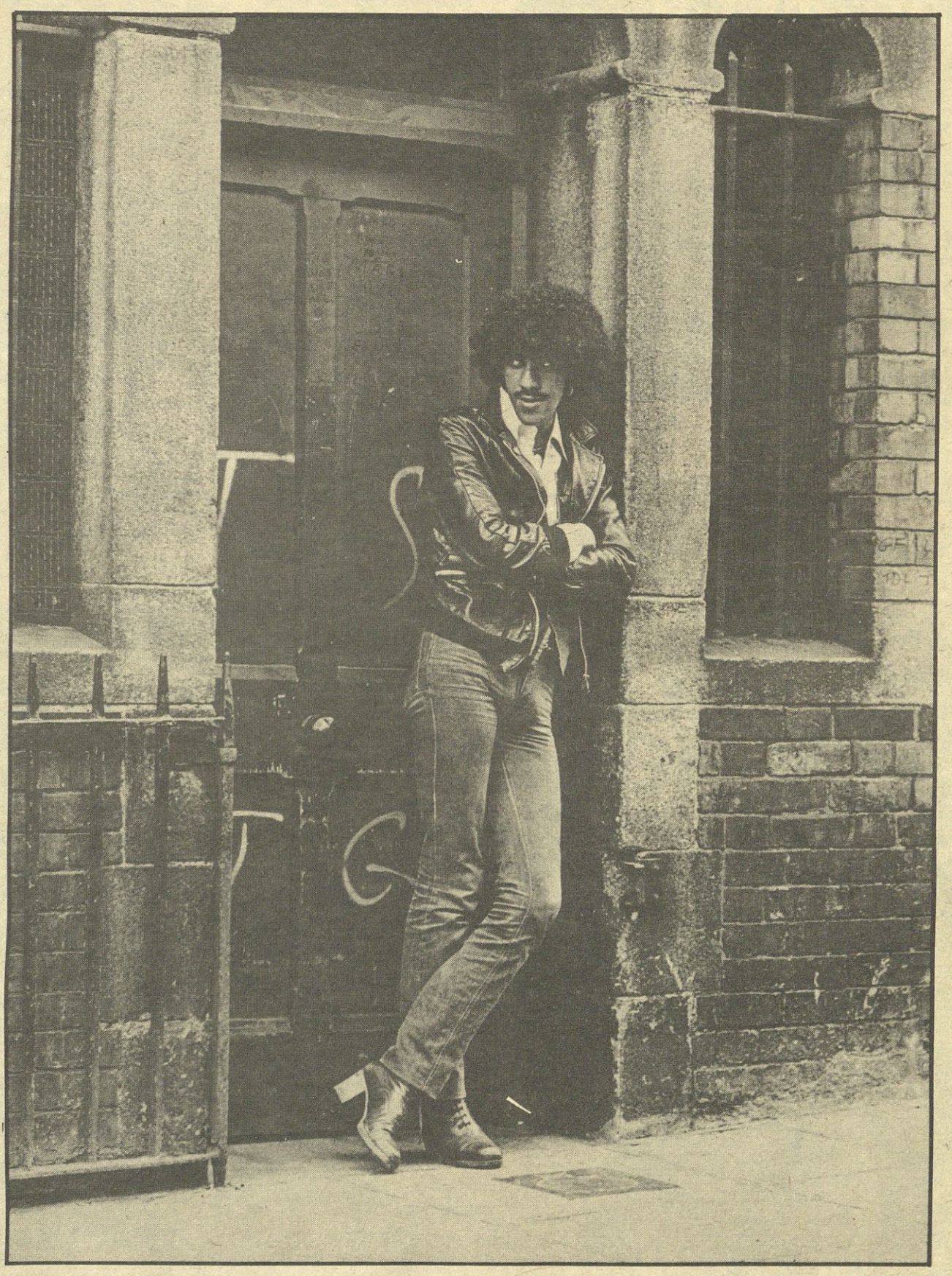

CHALKIE DAVIES

LIVE, DANGEROUS, AND AS HOT AS IT GETS

THIN LIZZY
Live And Dangerous (Vertigo)

AH NOW, this — *this* is a little more like it!

Not only is this, the eagerly awaited Lizzy double live album, easily the best live rock album since the Feelgoods' "Stupidity", but it almost single-handedly vindicates that hoariest battering ram of currrent rock crit cliche razor-jobs: the trouncing of the live double album package.

Because "Live And Dangerous" is the *goods* — that thrilling aural documentary that not only captures all the muscle, dynamism, cut and thrust and gorgeous brainplate scouring of being right there on the spot, but also — infinitely more exciting — one of those oh-so-precious 'live' albums that captures rock action at its purest, most senses-pillaging transcendant ascendant — thus joining a lofty pantheon shared only by the likes of the Stones' "Get Your Ya Yas" *(not* their "Love You Live" set), Jerry Lee Lewis' "Greatest Show On Earth" and Dylan Albert Hall tapes.

"Live And Dangerous" is in fact a near-perfect statement of intent by what is right now the best hard rock band in the world. It's certainly the band's finest recording yet — mating most of their finest songs with that positively lethal style of firepower hyper-drive they've mastered from years of amping it out and honing it all down to the needle-point, jugular-stab passion-shots that have in turn made them the audacously fine live band they are.

The ingredients are easy enough to divine: a rock-steady, granite-like anchor of a rhythm section providing a deadly pulse for the finest twin lead guitar duo *ever* (so good these days they cut even the legendary Duane Allman / Dicky Betts pairing of aeons past to shreds) . . .

But that's only half the story if that. The real Lizzy ace up the sleeve is the material. Phil Lynott is a superb rock and roll songwriter, matching consistently rivetting chord progressions — these the perfect epic sequences for the Robertson / Gorham gymnastics — that often borrow from classic hard rock and heavy metal riffing but have a classilly disarming twist to them, an edge that bites like a rabid dog, matching them to lyrics that while hardly 'profound' still possess an agreeably florid romantic pitch.

Plus Lynott is a dynamic singer. Comparisons with Springsteen have often been made, but I've always believed that Lynott has outclassed the latter as a vocalist to the point where his self-assertive dynamism (which consistently helps transcend the often dubious aspects in his 'narrative' lyrics and particularly the jive boy, semi-obnoxious braggadoccio stance so noticeable in, say, "The Rocker") has made Springsteen's style of earnest, deep throated vocalese sound positively leaden by comparison.

OK, so the ingredients have been acknowledged — now to the product boasting their presence. "Live And Dangerous" has three sides of dazzling tour de force hard rock that never, never lets up for a second: hard rock that stands as the very epitome of the term. The all-important stationing of the mobile sound studio is perfect (a factor so, so many other bands recording live fail to even take into consideration) so that the full muscle of the band is there, flexing out superb performance after superb performance — and you're there between them and the audience. The whole experience takes on all the potency of An Event as well.

The pacing of the repertoire is also superb. From the opening cut and thrust of "Jailbreak" through the heroics of "Emerald", the irrepressible swagger of "Southbound" and side one's imperious rock-out of Bob Seger's "Rosalie", there are no gaps, no fillers (just the goods delivered and performed in definitively fine fettle.

Side two takes care of the business with a spry reading of "Dancing In The Moonlight" before Lizzy's rock warrior stance is given full-throttle vent with "Massacre" and a passionate, affectingly sensitive rendition of "Still In Love With You", where Brian Robertson's guitar solo demonstrates all the grace, grandeur and melodious panache that other, infinitely more prestigious players (and here I'm thinking of Jimmy Page, in particular) simply don't supply. A sly, sleazy version of "Johnny The Fox" leaps out with impish sure-footedness in every bar.

Events reach a peak on side three, which stands in toto as being as gorgeous a celebration of hard rock heroism as I can recall. "Cowboy Song" starts off with a deftly inimitable sway that just *wills* you to be moved, sweeping off as it does with a slice of audience participation that never gets out of hand — and, just as the song's about to end, there's a sudden magic chord before the band storm into "The Boys Are Back In Town". It's such a damned exhilarating moment that it defies mere description (as do all the true rock epiphanies); you just feel it thrashing your pleasure centres into shreds.

But even after this spine-snapping thrill, the fireworks are not yet even halfway over, as only two seconds after "Boys" concludes, the Lizzies blitzkrieg into "Don't Believe A Word" and it sounds — God — even better. "Warriors" is up next, a new song in "Are You Ready?" which thunders along like God himself setting up shop for the apocalypse, and the listener has been repeatedly KO'd into the kind of frenzy that is the very essence of rock mania. A savage concoction, all told.

Unfortunately side four chalks up a few minus dockets, these due to the implementation of (a) one fairly duff song in "Suicide", (b) Sha La La", a piece that concedes to some of the tiresome ploys — extended solos et al — that the band have elsewhere so staunchly stayed clear of, thereby granting the preceding sides such a corporate ferocity, and (c) "Baby Drives Me Crazy", little more than an excuse for tedious audience rabble-rousing with nothing of any musical merit to back it up.

But even when you've decided that this is only 75% proof killer and that side four *is* a turkey, the band abruptly belt into a finale of "The Rocker", performing this classic with such unrelenting locomotion that it virtually obliterates the trace of all that immediately went before. And you're right back in the throes of the mania that kept you entranced on that stupendous third side. God knows, this band is nothing if not irrepressible and to pour more superlatives on the fire would be, to say the least, redundant.

One important point though — Lizzy are now easily the best mainstream hard rock band, as I've said, in the world and this is the clincher. This band should be huge — not merely big but HUGE — because they have more power in one bass pedal than all the other geriatric behemoths who are currently shifting platinum like we shit beans.

It's not merely the new wave onslaught we should be concerned with — but also getting Lizzy up there to give the likes of Led Zeppelin, and the Stones even, a kick off the pedestal.

Meanwhile "Live And Dangerous" is as hot as they come, and as hot as it gets. Lizzy have always played like warriors and this is an album made by heroes.

For your listening pleasure. What more could you possibly ask for?

Nick Kent

JOHN HALL
John Hall (Asylum)

THE FORMERLY reputable Mr. Hall leaves his hometown, moves on up the West Coast and books in at the Hotel Catatonia.

I was never quite ignited by his previous outfit Orleans, though they were classy enough, on the sharp edge of mellow with the comparable summertime waywardness of a Twilley or Kihn. Last year's "Before The Dance" showed them edging into the playlist of superior FM — not so dreary or dreamy as the usual nose-bag shuffle.

But this solo album could be the work of people born with a silver spoon in the nostril. That some of the assembled cast are extremely capable musicians only nags my sensitivity further. Joe Sample, Wilton Felder, Steve Gadd, Chuck Rainey, Bill Payne and even God save his soul, Lowell George. What you get is whitewashed music so 'pleasant' and 'listenable' it practically evaporated. It makes David Soul's last single seem positively dangerous.

Maybe he needed a band to keep him even; here he seems to have fallen prey to the MOR influences of his wife Johanna, who contributes all the rilly groo-vay lyrics. "Advice & Consent: Johanna Jall" it sez on the cover. How *nice*. The mental chemistry rarely rises above the average: *'Come on now people trust yo'self you, you got to, someday, got to trust . . . '."*

Go with the effluence.

The musicians are given no chance to juggle around the themes and motifs (as if they cared). They lay back and fall off the stool. A wallet or two gets bruised. Pristine, slow/mid tempo, sterilized harmonies, obligatory sunshine solos — you probably get them in supermarkets in LA.

We watch the break of day, mess around wit' the wrong woman, don't let anyone tell us what to do, generally voyage through life in general. Genuinely. Oh, and there's a lovely picture of Carly & James in matching white baggy trousers. File under FM: 'For Me' . . .

Ian Penman